

**Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission
ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMITTEE
June 22, 2023 Meeting Minutes
Remote Participation Meeting, 7:30 pm**

A. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Sarah Doherty and Andrew Elders
ABSENT: Lou Garapolo and Scot Mazur
STAFF: Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner

B. AGENDA

Motion by Doherty to approve the agenda. Second by Elders. Motion approved 2-0.

AYE: Doherty and Elders

NAY: None

C. MINUTES

Motion by Doherty to approve the minutes from May 25, 2023. Second by Elders.

AYE: Doherty and Elders

NAY: None

D. 609 S Elmwood Ave (Andrew France): Discuss project to alter front stair design (Gunderson Historic District).

Committee member Elders introduced the project. Planner Trexler provided an overview. She said Chair Garapolo is absent but provided comments by email that she will read for each project. She said Chair Garapolo asked if there is any evidence that the stairs were centrally located.

Andrew France, the homeowner, and Paz Lopez, the contractor, were present. Mr. France indicated there is no evidence the stairs were centrally located. Committee member Doherty said there are a handful of Gunderson houses with a side entry.

Committee member Elders noted the 1908 Gunderson handbook and asked about code requirements. Planner Trexler said there is an exception for houses in the historic districts regarding railing heights and it is up to the homeowner. Committee member Elders said a wood railing might look disjointed. The way it's set up with the knee wall adds to the strong

nature. Mr. France said it's not real brick, it's layered concrete. Committee member Doherty recommended stucco and Mr. France said that would be cost prohibitive as they would have to demolish the existing wall and build a new one. The Committee agreed altering the concrete steps would be okay but a stucco knee wall is more appropriate.

Committee member Elders asked if they will prepare renderings and Mr. France said there are photos they want to emulate. Committee member Elders said there are different configurations. Mr. Lopez said the handrail will start at the first step and terminate at the wall. There's an 8-foot landing. The area below would become storage space. Mr. France said there's an under-hang they will match at the bottom of the porch. Committee member Elders said they will need more visuals of what they want to do. He said it will look pretty different than a solid knee wall.

Committee member Doherty said if they're going for wood over stucco, they should provide cost estimates. It helps to see if it's financially unfeasible.

Mr. France said the steps are deteriorating quickly and Committee member Elders explained the review process. He said the Commission meeting is in two weeks. He said he understands time is of the essence, but if the HPC doesn't have enough information they won't be able to approve it.

Mr. Lopez asked if anything else should be submitted, like structural drawings. Planner Trexler said it doesn't have to be a full permit set, but drawings should be submitted.

Planner Trexler asked the Committee if they feel the steps are historic. Committee member Elders said these could be wire-scratched brick from the period; if there are fake bricks, they did a decent job. Mr. France said he can bring samples. Committee member Elders recommended looking at the stucco on either side of the knee wall. He said he doesn't see any indication of stucco patching.

E. 232 S Ridgeland Ave (Curtis Cox): Discuss project to add a rear, two-story addition (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Committee member Elders introduced the project. Planner Trexler provided an overview. She provided Chair Garapolo's written comments. Chair Garapolo's comments included that stucco siding would be better, the height of new elements doesn't relate, there should be a trim around the base, and windows and openings should relate. He asked about the exterior guard rail which is shown as glass and if there would be vertical supports.

Present on behalf of the project were Michael Ojrzanowski, the architect, and Curtis Cox, the homeowner. Mr. Ojrzanowski said a lot of the comments read by staff are applicable

and would soften the addition. He said they are trying to match the character while distinguishing it.

Committee member Elders said he agrees with Chair Garapolo on the cladding. It's a distinct departure. He said the north side is a big expanse of blank wall and he would bring the break line lower to relate to the porch. He said the design needs to be more compatible and recommended bringing an oblique view from the sidewalk to show visibility. Committee member Doherty said the lot is wide so you will see more. Mr. Ojrzanowski said there is a setback on the south façade to alleviate this.

Committee member Elders mentioned the visual detail on the historic gable end and said that might be something they can draw on. Mr. Ojrzanowski said they didn't want to frame out fake, non-structural embellishments.

Committee member Doherty said she has not seen an addition that reads this contemporary. Additions tend to blend better with the house, matching rooflines and with similar windows. She said she would like this design if it was not attached to the house. Committee member Elders said they've seen contemporary farther from the house, but the issue here is the size. Mr. Ojrzanowski said they will bring an oblique view. The elevations don't show setbacks.

Committee member Elders said the glass railing is a departure and Mr. Ojrzanowski clarified that this is a concept design and he doesn't think it should be glass. He said there is a parapet wall with a guardrail behind it. He said they will do a picket guardrail to match the porch.

Committee member Elders recommended continuing the water table around. He said the brick would be okay if it is horizontal not vertical. The color is going in the right direction. Mr. Ojrzanowski agreed horizontal would be a good gesture to Oak Park and said they think there's a resonance between stucco and brick. He said brighter colors catch your eye. The stucco will pop and the brick should recede.

Committee member Elders said the long spindles on the historic porch read as very modern and contemporary and could be used elsewhere.

Committee member Doherty said she is okay with the brick. Committee member Elders asked about the price differences between stucco and brick. Mr. Cox said they haven't priced out the options yet.

Mr. Ojrzanowski said they agree the windows shouldn't be totally modern. He asked if they can use casement-awning windows with a muntin pattern at the top. Committee member

Doherty said applicants have done this in the past. Mr. Cox said the existing windows on the stairs are leaking and said they are looking for a way to improve efficiency like adding a storm window. Committee member Elders said storm windows are fine. Historic windows with storms can be efficient. Mr. Cox said they want to be good stewards to their home. The windows have been there since the house was built, there's no way something they buy now will last that long. Committee member Elders said a lot of homeowners don't realize that. He said he appreciates what they are doing and they should just soften it as much as they can. Mr. Cox said the addition is necessary so his wife can age in place, they don't want a large addition.

F. 118 Home Ave (118 Home Corp.): Discuss project to add a rear, four-story addition and restore the front porch (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Committee member Elders introduced the project. Planner Trexler provided an overview. She provided Chair Garapolo's written comments, which included favorable comments regarding the front porch restoration and cupola. Chair Garapolo stated that windows should be wood with divided lights, the new addition is too tall, the windows and horizontal banding do not relate, the exterior composite panels do not relate, and the concrete block base looks out of place. He recommended a perspective rendering be provided to the Commission.

Committee member Doherty said if there's no evidence of the cupola, it shouldn't be added.

John Schiess, the architect, showed a video of walking past the house. He described the location of the house and size of the adjacent buildings. He said it has been vacant for over five years. He said it probably had some ornate details around the windows that they hope are still there and will restore. He explained the zoning for the lot and that it has no alley. The Committee discussed the parking lot there currently and parking in the area.

Mr. Schiess said they haven't found evidence of a cupola, but it fits the prototype. He said the roof has a flat or minimum pitch at the top and they think there might have been one. Commissioner Doherty said cupolas are rare in Oak Park.

Mr. Schiess explained some of the decisions they made including to not move the house and how to accommodate parking. Committee member Elders said the best example he's seen is the one located behind this. He said it's not the original configuration but it doesn't detract. This house is indicative of what the neighborhood was before the intrusion of apartment buildings. This was an Italianate village; it's supposed to be a countrified, picturesque building, but the addition is not. Committee member Elders recommended

reproducing one of the polygonal bays. He said if they add the cupola, it should have the same roof pitch. It does mask the addition.

Committee member Doherty said the first reaction of the full Commission is going to be regarding the size. Committee member Elders said two stories would be ideal. Clipping the corner can soften it. Committee member Doherty said it's coming past the bays pretty significantly.

The Committee discussed the porch and recommended basing it on the Sanborn map. It was fully roofed to both sides. In the 1957 photo, the center window looks longer, like a door. He recommended elongating the window again to make the balcony make sense. Mr. Schiess said he likes the allusion of the second-story porch.

Committee member Elders said currently the design is too much of a departure. This type of house isn't seen in Oak Park much anymore and requires a deft hand to make it work right. He said he applauds using the house and the setback, it speaks to a different era. Committee member Doherty said this could be 1860s.

Committee member Elders said the porch at 947 South Blvd was built in 1900, so they should use that. Mr. Schiess said they will use McAlester's field guide.

Committee member Doherty said a perspective from the street will be helpful.

G. **Other Business:** None

H. **Adjourn**

Motion by Doherty to adjourn. Second by Elders. Motion approved 2-0.

AYE: Doherty and Elders

NAY: None

Meeting adjourned at 9:00PM.

Minutes prepared by Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner.